


Winning for the Paralympics

Sainsbury's & Channel 4



Word count: 1,997

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A photograph capturing a moment from the Paralympic torch relay. An elderly woman, dressed in a white jacket with blue accents and bright blue trousers, is seated in a wheelchair. She is holding a large, silver, textured torch that is actively burning with a bright orange flame. The background is dark and filled with out-of-focus lights, suggesting a large stadium or arena at night. To the right of the woman, a large, metallic, aerodynamic object, possibly a torch or a piece of equipment, is also visible, with flames emanating from it. The overall atmosphere is one of a significant and historic event.

Sainsbury's and Channel 4 collaborated in a unique endeavour – scale sponsorship of the Paralympics, with no involvement in the preceding Olympics. Their activity was much more than broadcast sponsorship of the coverage of the Games themselves. Both achieved their objectives, with Sainsbury's delivering revenue growth and ROI, and Channel 4 delivering record audience figures. But perhaps more importantly, both brands changed the way Britain felt about Paralympic sport, and disability overall.

Word count: 71

Introduction

The Paralympics were an unprecedented popular success. The nation was swept away in excitement and we met new heroes. That was always going to happen, right? Brands involved would inevitably prosper. Getting involved was a marketing no-brainer.

Well, no.

Like many successes, Paralympics looks effortless in retrospect. It was anything but. The success was in large part due to two brands deciding to do something unconventional – to sponsor something marginal, but important, and use marketing to make Britain care about it.

Sainsbury's and Channel 4 were in a unique position. The only brands in history ever to have a significant stake in Paralympics without any involvement in the Olympics preceding it. To succeed, they had to:

Make the event itself popular.

Introduce a nation to sports and sports stars that were largely alien to them.

To get Britain to see the athletic achievement, not the disability (so this was a sports sponsorship, not a do-gooder CR initiative).

Sainsbury's needed to generate revenue, and Channel 4 to fulfil their public service remit by inspiring change in people's lives and audience growth.

Both brands succeeded.



Thanks for the warm up?

The Paralympics is a hostage to the fortunes of the world's biggest sporting event. If the Olympics succeeds, Paralympics can be a bad hangover. If the Olympics flops, few will be interested in Paralympics.

Sainsbury's and Channel 4 both faced the biggest marketing challenge of 2012.

This is not a paper about the broadcast sponsorship of the event itself. Had both brands waited until then to collaborate, the success would not have been anywhere near as great.

This is a paper about Marketing, not about Sponsorship. A unique collaboration to market the Paralympics themselves.



Our objectives – and the state of play pre activation

In order for the sponsorship to work, 3 tough things needed to be achieved.

1) Make Paralympics popular.

To get full value, we needed Britain to fall in love with the event. But awareness and interest in the Paralympics was low:

16%

spontaneous awareness

48%

ambivalent or actively uninterested

2) Introduce a nation to new sports and new sports stars.

Olympics showed that personalities were vital to create interest. We needed to build understanding and personal connection. But we started from a very low base:

82%

could not name a single British Paralympian

50%

felt that disabled people could not achieve what able bodied people could

40%

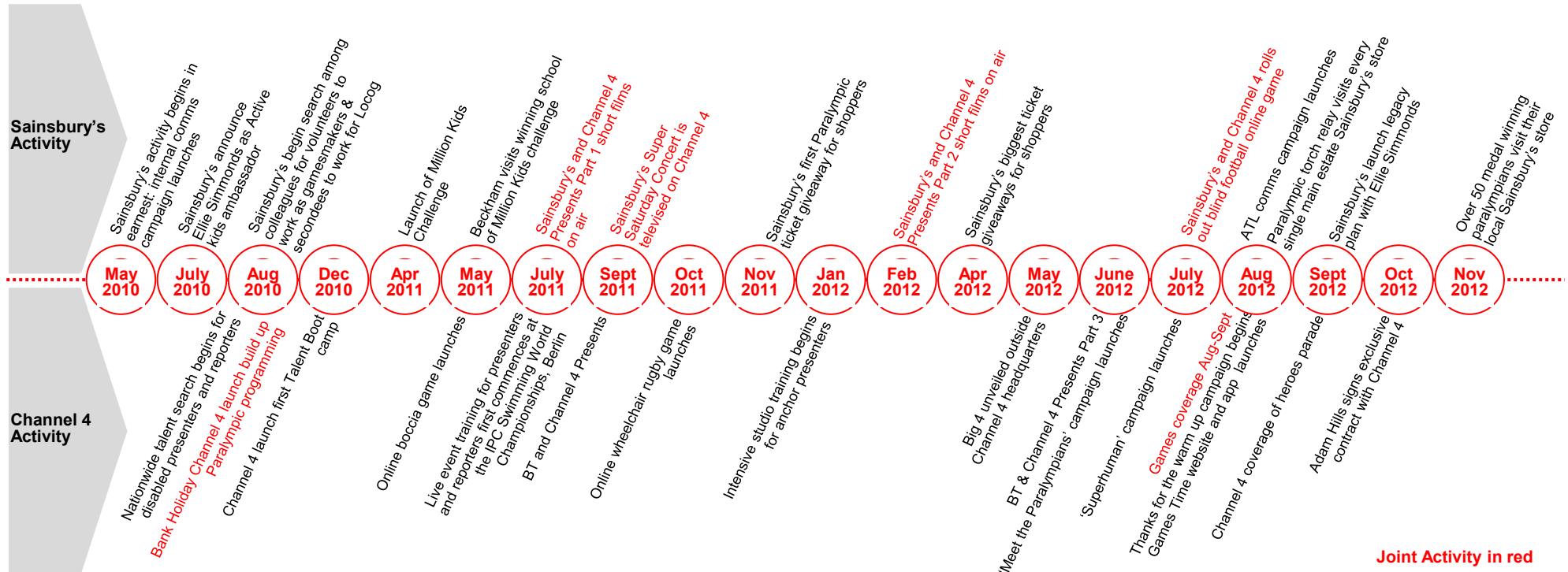
felt disability would hold people back

3) To get Britain to see the athletic achievement, not the disability.

Sports sponsorships are more valuable than CR initiatives. If the Paralympics was seen as do-goodery, it would have lower value for the brands. But we had a long way to go:

A long term plan to change perceptions

This timeline shows the activity of both brands in overview:



Sainsbury's approach to activation

Here's to extraordinary



Sainsbury's approach to activation – “Here's to extraordinary”

Setting the tone was crucial. Knowing that the public didn't have the language to express feelings about disability or Paralympic sport, the word extraordinary was chosen to show a helpful way to think about difference in this context – positively, but without being patronising.

Sainsbury's activation was split into 3 distinct strategic pillars.

1.
Turn
Sainsbury's
colleagues into
advocates

2.
Engage
Sainsbury's
communities
through schools

3.
Engage
customers in
and out of store

1. Turn Sainsbury's colleagues into advocates

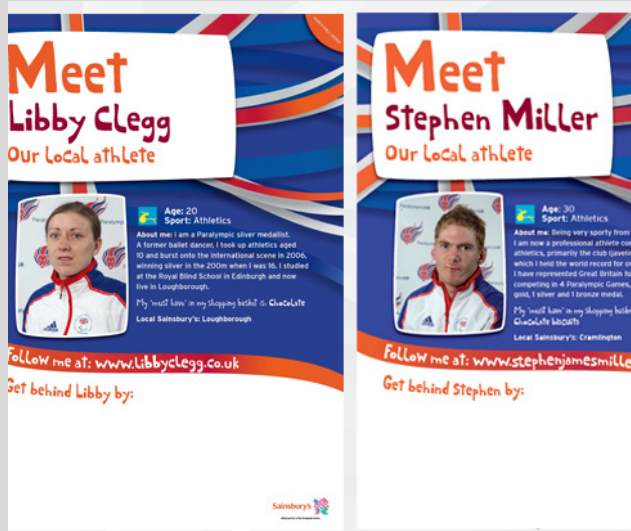
Sainsbury's greatest asset is our store colleagues. They became Britain's biggest Paralympics fanbase:

We paired 70 local Paralympians with stores across the country.

We gave every colleague the opportunity to try a Paralympic sport.

We seconded 30 colleagues to LOCOG and nominated 45 to take part in the Paralympic Torch Relay.

150 colleagues became Gamesmakers and on one day 5,000 colleagues attended the Paralympics as spectators.



2. Engage Sainsbury's communities through schools

Sainsbury's have run the Active Kids scheme in schools since 2005. This was a great asset. Research suggested kids had less prejudice about Paralympic sport, and could create enthusiasm in households.

The Million Kids Challenge provided equipment and training to schools for 1 million children to try a Paralympic sport. (It was so popular that over 2.4 million children from 8,000 schools actually ended up getting involved).

And of course, it was featured on Channel 4 news.



3. Engage customers in and out of store

Customers were engaged with Paralympic specific activation and communication:

Sainsbury's Super Saturday was televised on Channel 4. Top pop acts, combined with Paralympians playing sport and opportunities for kids to have a go.

The Paralympic Torch visited 550 Sainsbury's supermarkets, 100 customers got the chance to take part in the Torch Relay

12,000 tickets were given to customers.

A communications campaign cemented the excitement in the public.



Channel 4's approach to activation



Channel 4's approach to activation

It is in Channel 4's DNA to take risks. As a public service broadcaster, we have a proud history of programming featuring disabled people.

Rather than simply televise the event, we created content and tools to help viewers better understand the games, programming that would help people talk and think differently about disability, and the biggest marketing campaign in Channel 4's history.

Channel 4 set a series of challenging goals and rolled out a programme of internal change and development to start shifting perceptions.

1.

**Commit to
disabled talent
onscreen**

2.

**Make
Paralympic
sport simple to
enjoy**

3.

**Create the best
Paralympics
coverage ever**

1. Commit to new disabled talent onscreen

The Paralympic Games represented an opportunity for Channel 4 to discover a new generation of disabled presenters.

We conducted a talent search and rigorous training programme to ensure that at least half of the on-air team were disabled. An ex-Royal Marine, a carpenter and a former Paralympic swimmer were among the new disabled presenters uncovered by Channel 4 in the biggest talent search of its kind.



2. Make Paralympic sport simple to enjoy

Research showed that a third of UK adults found the disability classifications confusing. They would be more interested in watching Paralympic sports if they had better understanding of eligibility rules for each event.

Channel 4 worked with Paralympic gold medallist Giles Long to develop LEXI, a new graphics-based system that helps viewers understand the classification system used to distinguish different levels and forms of disability amongst Paralympic athletes.

“The ‘Lexi’ system that it used to explain the different classifications was essential viewing, its presenters, commentators and pundits were of a high standard, and it found some genuinely compelling stories to tell.”

Jonathan Liew, The Daily Telegraph

LEXI

THE LOW DOWN

Research commissioned by Channel 4 showed that a third of UK adults found the disability classifications confusing and would be more interested in watching Paralympic sports if they had a better understanding of the eligibility rules for each event.

85% of viewers agreed that the LEXI classification system was explained well in the Channel 4 coverage

“The ‘Lexi’ system that it used to explain the different classifications was essential viewing”
The Daily Telegraph

Channel 4 worked with Paralympic gold medallist Giles Long to develop LEXI, a new graphics-based system that helps viewers understand the classification system used to distinguish different levels and forms of disability amongst Paralympic athletes. The LEXI system – which was endorsed by LOCOG and the British Paralympic Association – gave viewers an extra depth of understanding that helped them appreciate the London Games.

3. Create the best Paralympics coverage ever...

Channel 4 committed in its bid to LOCOG to provide the most comprehensive Paralympics coverage ever, with more than 150 hours of television programming.

In fact, we massively over-delivered.

Not only did we shift the afternoon coverage from More4 to C4, we also provided an additional 350 hours of live coverage online. Viewers could also keep up via Paralympics apps for mobile and tablet devices.

All presented in association with Sainsbury's and BT.

“One of the break-out hits of the Games was The Last Leg a late-night magazine programme which took an affectionate but truly Channel 4 wry look at the day's events and introduced the phrase ‘is it alright to laugh at?’ to Paralympic vocabulary”

Daily Star leader column



3...(and the best ever ads for Paralympic coverage)

The 'Meet the Superhumans' TV ad mixing bold close-up imagery of disabled bodies in training, competition and at rest with scenes that conjured up the extraordinary back-stories of the athletes.

This was supported by a cheeky 'Thanks for the Warm-up' poster campaign around the end of the Olympics, making it quite clear that the Paralympics should be seen as a thrilling event in its own right.





**“The
greatest
Paralympics ever”**

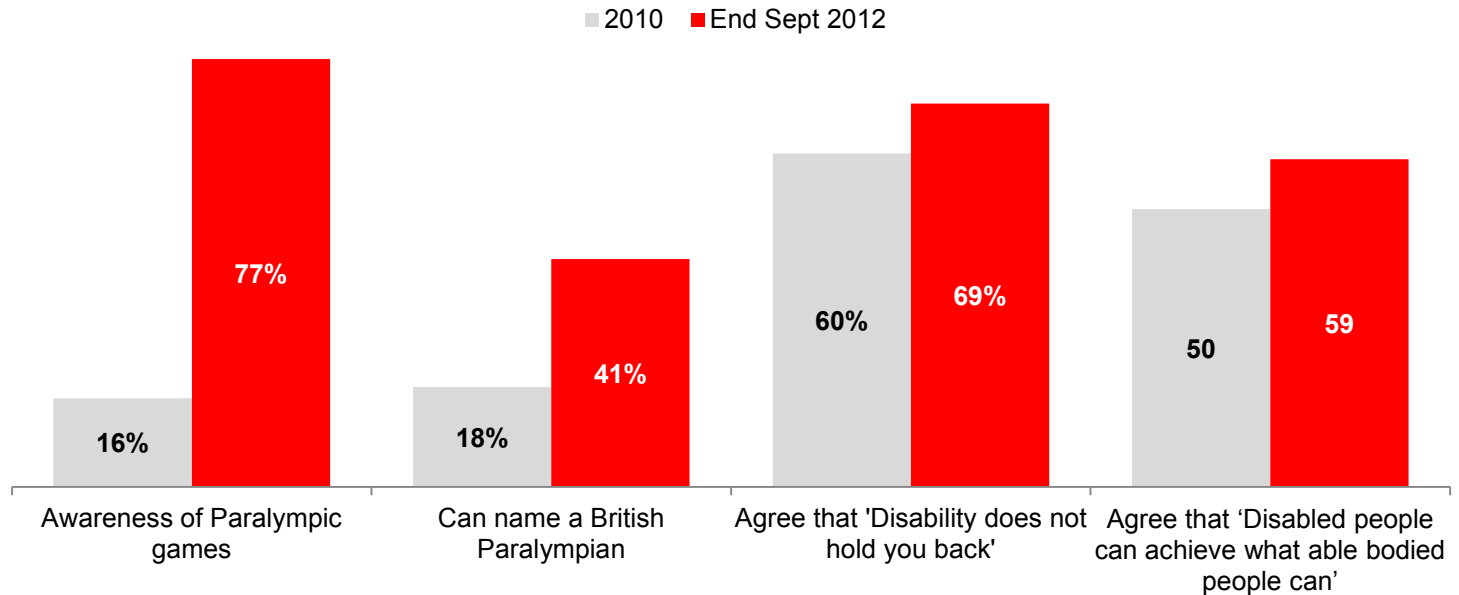
IPC president Philip Craven

“The greatest Paralympics ever”

Both Sainsbury's and Channel 4 achieved our initial joint objectives:

1. Make the Paralympics popular
2. Introduce a nation to new sports and new sports stars
3. To get Britain to see the athletic achievement, not the disability

Almost 40m
people tuned in



Sainsbury's won the sponsorship race

Sainsbury's had the highest association of any Paralympic sponsor, and the highest growth in association during the event. Such strong association, naturally had a knock on effect on brand perceptions.

Brand Empathy' hit record levels since the start of HPI's tracking and for the first time Sainsbury's were top of the big 4 supermarkets. 'Brand awareness' and 'Consideration' also hit their highest levels yet.

This positivity towards the brand was felt just as deeply among our galvanised fanbase of colleagues. With their enthusiasm for the sponsorship reaching 89%.

Brand empathy, awareness and consideration hit record levels

89%

colleague enthusiasm for sponsorship

82%

claiming sponsorship made them feel better about Sainsbury's

Amongst Paralympic Games sponsors, Sainsbury's had the highest level of association post -Games, & the biggest growth in association



	Pre Wave 1 (July)	Pre Wave 2 (Aug)	Post Wave (Sept)	% difference
Sainsbury's	11%	21%	39%	28%
McDonald's	27%	30%	36%	9%
Coca-Cola	30%	30%	31%	1%
BT	18%	20%	25%	7%
Lloyds TSB	21%	16%	19%	-2%
edf ENERGY	16%	15%	19%	3%
P&G	15%	17%	17%	2%
adidas	14%	16%	14%	-
Cadbury	15%	11%	12%	-3%
British Gas	14%	11%	10%	-4%

Paralympic Games sponsorship (prompted awareness)

"The main ones are obviously BT and Sainsbury's. Rather than overt messages, it's more about their positivity and creating a brand image." (Male, Sheffield)

"Such big brands like BT and Sainsbury's: it gives you a positive feeling." (Female, London)

Q12: Prompted awareness of sponsors of the London 2012 Paralympic Games. Base: All Respondents: Pre Wave 1 – 944, Pre Wave 2 – 2045, Post Wave – 2004.

Source: Paralympic Sponsorship pre waves (July and August) and post wave (Sept), 2012, Ipsos MORI

Sainsbury's won the sponsorship race

#1

domestic Olympic sponsor

16

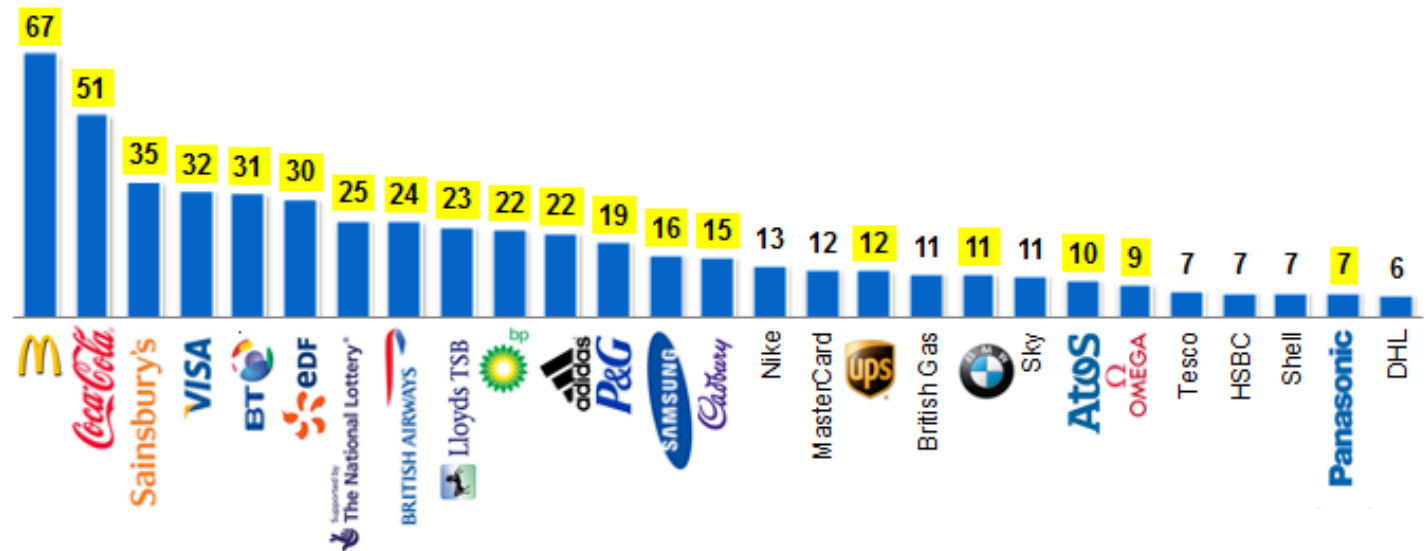
Olympic sponsors finished behind us in the overall awareness table

The magnitude of Sainsbury's success is perhaps best shown in the remarkable awareness data collected by Nielsen (official data and research supplier to LOCOG) at the close of the Paralympics.

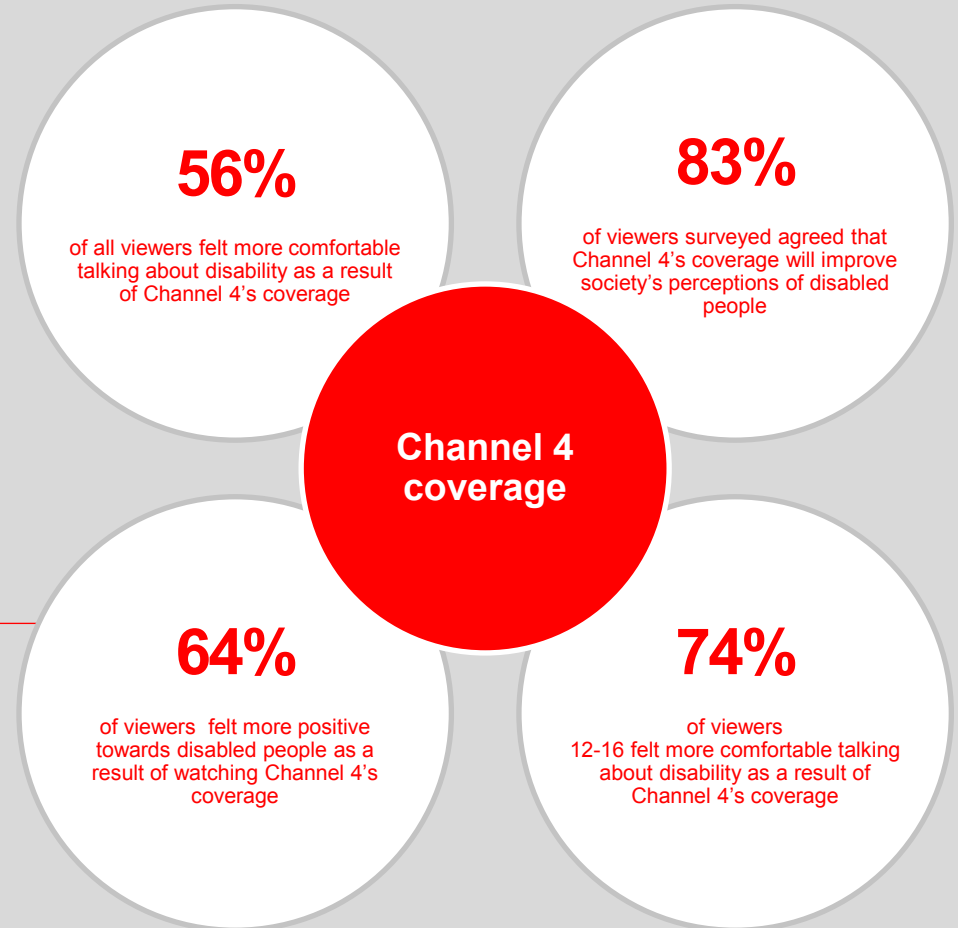
Sainsbury's finished 2012 as the third most recalled Olympic sponsor, ahead of all domestic sponsors, and ahead of 16 other brands who had sponsored the Olympics and Paralympics.

A brand that had sponsored only half the event, for the first time ever, had finished on the podium.

It was the marketing equivalent of taking up athletics in 2010, and then finishing with a bronze medal in London behind Usain Bolt and Yohan Blake.



Channel 4 coverage was pivotal



“Now, when we see a disabled athlete, we speak the language of thoughtful admiration. The people of Channel 4, who did most of the broadcasting for the Paralympics were especially good at speaking it.”

The Daily Telegraph

Sainsbury's Return on investment

As a sponsor, Sainsbury's saw its investment pay back, with a positive overall sponsorship ROI (unfortunately the actual figures remain confidential) and an ATL advertising profit ROI for 1:4.3.



+5.6% sales growth

in the 12 weeks to September 2012.

ATL profit ROI of 4.3

“Among the big four supermarkets, the standout performance (this summer) is from Sainsbury's. Its sponsorship of the Paralympic Games has clearly borne fruit”.

Ed Garner, Kantar.

Channel 4 Return on investment

As a public service broadcaster, Channel 4 were not primarily seeking to profit from the event. Success is based on audience engagement.

11.6 million watched the Opening Ceremony (C4's highest viewing since Big Brother 2002).

Almost 40 million people – more than two-thirds of the UK population – watched the Paralympic Games on TV.

By the end of the first full day, more people had watched the 2012 Paralympics on C4 than viewed the whole of the Paralympics in 2008.

During the Paralympics games, Channel 4 was up 65% for volume and 76% for share against the same period last year.

Three quarters (76%) agreed '*Channel 4 did a great job covering the Paralympics*' (this despite some initial criticism for carrying ads).

36% of Paralympic viewers felt more positive towards Channel 4 overall – this measure is particularly important determinant of success for a Public Service Broadcaster.

The success of the coverage is shown by Channel 4's success in winning coverage of the Sochi 2014 Winter Games and 2016 Rio Paralympic Games.

11.6 million viewers

watched the Opening Ceremony

Almost 40 million

watched the Paralympic Games on TV.

+65% volume

+76% share

for Channel 4 during the Paralympics games vs.
same period last year.

Legacy

Channel 4 have committed £250,000 to ensure disabled people appear throughout the Channel 4 schedule. The Last Leg recently returned to Channel 4 as an entertainment format in its own right at the heart of the Friday night schedule.

Ellie Simmons continues as an ambassador for Active Kids. Sainsbury's continue sponsorship of the British Paralympic Association to Rio 2016.

The partnership between the brands was continued when they announced a major AFP partnership, involving 65 hours of programming, with Channel 4 showing "What's cooking from the Sainsbury's kitchen?".



Winning for the Paralympics

The challenges faced by Channel 4 and Sainsbury's were huge. No brands had ever attempted a partnership on this scale solely with the Paralympics. By working together, they prospered. Neither brand could have succeeded alone, with Sainsbury's sponsorship (alongside BT) making coverage possible, and Channel 4 giving Sainsbury's platforms to build awareness.



The games needed to be popularised.

The public needed to be educated.

Attitudes needed to be changed.

We did it all.

In a year to be proud of, we all celebrated a Paralympics to be proud of, and we should all be proud of Sainsbury's and Channel 4 marketing at the heart of that success.